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TWO SERMONS;

PREACHED AT

THE ASSIZES,

HOLDEN AT HEREFORD, ON MARCH 24,

AND JULY 24, 1793.

BY JOHN KEYSALL, A. M.

CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY,

AND RECTOR OF GROTON, SUFFOLK.

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SERMON I.

PROV. CH. XIV. V. 34.

"*Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a* "*reproach to any people.*"

Preached before the Hon. Mr. Justice Grose, March 24, 1793.

THAT the greatest blessings are liable to be perverted to the worst of purposes, is a melancholy fact, which the records of past ages, and our own observation and experience, concur to prove.

If we examine the pages of the historian, we shall meet with many sad examples of nations, which, possessing every advantage that wealth, peace, and prosperity could bestow, have, by a luxurious and effeminate conduct, and a general corruption of morals, brought on their own political dissolution; and turned those very benefits, which, if

properly used, might have given security and stability to their grandeur, into the instruments of their utter degradation and ruin.

If, on the other hand, we confine our observation within a narrower sphere, and content ourselves with investigating the actions and characters of individuals around us, we shall perceive too many men perverting the blessings of health, riches, influence, and talents, to low and unworthy, if not to criminal, purposes ; thus, abusing the gifts, and counteracting the intentions of that good Providence which hath so liberally heaped its bounties upon them : thus, blindly rejecting the offers of solid and rational happiness, and embracing with fatal eagerness, the means of certain misery and destruction.

In no instance is the truth and force of our position more obvious, than in the abuse of *reason*, that inestimable gift of heaven, by which man is raised above the rest of the animal world, and not only made susceptible of the truest and most refined pleasures in this life ; but also qualified for the present contemplation, and future enjoy-

ment of the exalted, and permanent felicities of the life to come.

This prime and distinguishing faculty of our nature may be abused, by either under or over-rating its value and extent; by either suffering its powers to grow languid, through inactivity; or by stretching them beyond their proper limits, and applying them to objects and purposes for which they were not originally adapted or designed.

The man who is wholly immersed in sensual and corporeal gratifications, degrades and weakens the nobler faculties of his mind; and throws down the barrier that divides rational from irrational creatures; and thus, "being in honour, he abideth "not, but is like the beasts that perish." *Psalm* xlix, *v.* 12.

Whilst *he* more flagrantly abuses his reason, who presumptuously attempts to soar above that sphere which eternal wisdom hath assigned to it, and impiously pretends to fathom the decrees, and measure the attributes of the Almighty, by the fallible and erroneous scale of human understanding.

It is a matter of the most serious concern

to every reflecting mind, that the age and country in which we live present us with frequent instances of both these species of abuse of reason.

Of the *former* kind, every day, every hour, affords us numerous and lamentable examples. Luxury, debauchery, and profaneness, are features, alas! too general to excite much surprise in the beholder; and too familiar, it is to be feared, to create that horror and disgust with which every virtuous and ingenuous mind ought to contemplate them.

Of the *latter* kind, the examples, though not so common, are more dangerous. The corrupt passions of human nature, it is true, unless checked by the salutary restraints of religion, are apt to assume an absolute and irresistible sway over our reason; but the consequences of such an usurped dominion, though dangerous and destructive, in proportion to its duration and extent, yet are they not so widely and so fatally felt, by the community at large, as those which arise from a diffusion of *immoral* and *irreligious principles* amongst mankind.

When, therefore, we see men whose stations in society, and literary attainments,

are such as may give some weight to their opinions, when we see *such* men propagating doctrines which would counteract every precept, and remove every sanction of revealed religion: when we see some of them, retaining indeed the name of a God, but denying his over-ruling providence, and interference in the concerns of men; whilst others daringly assert the materiality of the human soul; and thus strike at one of the main pillars of Christianity, by involving in uncertainty, the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments; we hesitate not to pronounce *such* men, abusers of reason of the very worst description: because their tenets, if generally received and adopted, would not only remove every ground of hope in a future life; but also effectually destroy all the present comfort and happiness of mankind, by robbing virtue of her only sure foundation and support; by breaking all faith and confidence between man and man; by loosening and dissolving every bond of civil union; and erecting anarchy, and confusion, on the ruins of order, and of peace.

From a disbelief of the doctrines, and a

disregard to the precepts of religion, men are easily led to a contempt for all earthly authority and control; nor can it be expected, that those turbulent passions and jarring interests which so frequently distract mankind, will be subdued and reconciled by human laws, whilst they resist the powerful admonitions of conscience, and the aweful sanctions of the laws of God.

On the contrary, were these restraints once universally broken through, fidelity and justice would cease from amongst us, and every distinction between right and wrong would be lost in the confusion that must inevitably follow. The lives and property of men would then have no fence to secure them. Power to obtain, and defend a possession, would give the sole title to its enjoyment: and that title would last, only till a superior force could take it away. In such a state, there would be nothing to restrain men from attacking and injuring one another, but their own temporary convenience; and no security for peace and quietness, but individual interest and advantage.

War and rapine would consequently soon

spread their baneful effects all around, and the whole world would become one dreadful scene of carnage and devastation. What I have here advanced is strikingly confirmed and exemplified in the instance of a neighbouring nation—A nation, once renowned for arts and arms; for learning and politeness; now, by the fatal influence of *atheistical principles*, and a *false philosophy*, sunk and degraded in the eyes of all Europe. Her government subverted! her altars overthrown! without religion! without laws! Dreaded by some, on account of that more than savage barbarity which hath marked all her steps with blood! and detested by all, who have any reverence for God, or regard for man! she hath recently added to the black catalogue of her crimes, the murder of her innocent and amiable monarch;—a monarch whose innate goodness of heart beamed through every action of his life; and upon whom no other crime appears to have been proved, than that he inherited, from a long line of ancestors, the title and authority of King; a name hateful to the ears of these republican levellers,

these determined foes to all order and subordination.

The treatment of the royal sufferer, previous to this last atrocious act, and the circumstances that more immediately attended it, were such as the virtuous and feeling mind would turn from with horror and indignation. The ingenuous historian of France will drop a tear, whilst he records the transactions of this disgraceful period. The moralist, whilst he reads them, will blush for the degeneracy of human nature. And posterity at large will be taught this important lesson, from the tragical narration, that in the *moral*, as well as in the *natural* world, the same causes will ever produce the same effects; and that the step is short, from impiety, and immorality, to faction and rebellion, and all their detestable and destructive consequences.

That our *own* annals have been once stained with the blood of a martyred sovereign, we must, with shame and contrition, confess. The circumstances that led to that sad catastrophe, and the consequences that followed upon it, are too well known

to those who have the least acquaintance with our history, to need a recital here. I shall therefore only observe, that whilst we humbly acknowledge, and deplore our national guilt, we have reason to admire the wisdom, and adore the goodness of the Almighty ; who, by defeating the councils, and checking the designs of those wicked men who had thus overturned our government, so soon restored to us the invaluable blessings of pure religion, and a lawful monarchy.

The most effectual way in which we can shew that we have a due sense of God's unspeakable mercies to us as a nation, is by gratefully recollecting the advantages we enjoy, and making a proper use and improvement of them.

All those evils that disturb the peace, and destroy the happiness of mankind, take their rise from the original corruption of our natures, and from a neglect of those means which alone can purify and reform them. The only means that can bring about so desirable a change, are such a firm belief, and ready reception, of the great and interesting truths of the Christian Revela-

tion, as shall produce suitable and powerful effects, both upon our principles, and our practice.

It is our happiness to live at this time in the enjoyment of the best and purest religion, and national worship, in the world. Duly sensible of its value and importance, let it be our care to preserve it in its genuine spirit and simplicity ; neither inclining to infidelity on the one hand, nor to fanaticism and enthusiasm on the other. The *former* of these extremes produced those fatal events, which have so lately taken place in a neighbouring country ; and the *latter* was the cause of that distraction and confusion, in which this kingdom was involved about the middle of the last century. Such consequences, wherever they may have arisen, every good man must lament, and every wise man will study to prevent a repetition of. By keeping ourselves equally clear from both extremes, we shall best secure our own individual welfare, and most effectually promote that of the country to which we belong.

It is an observation, founded on the uniform experience of ages, and sanctioned by

the authority of reason, that public communities have ever flourished, or been unprosperous, according as their virtues or their vices have gained the ascendancy. And this is farther confirmed by the assertion of one of the wisest of men, in the text, that "Righteousness exalteth a na-"tion; but sin is a reproach to (and we "may add, will be the ruin of) any people."

The fear of the Lord is indeed the wisdom of states, as well as individuals. Civil authority derives from it, its best support, and under its salutary influence men depart from many evils, which neither human sagacity could provide against, nor human laws prevent. There are many crimes which come not within the cognizance of any earthly tribunal. And by what are men held back from the commission of such crimes, but by the secret and irresistible force of religious and moral truth? Were this force and influence more generally felt, vice and profaneness would no longer rear their shameless fronts in our land, and the melancholy, though necessary sacrifices to public justice, which the laws require to be made upon these solemn occasions, would be

very considerably lessened, if not altogether done away. *Without* the support and co-operation of religion, we cannot expect human laws, however wise and just in their principles, to be obeyed; the power of the supreme governor firmly established; or the peace and order of society effectually secured and maintained.

The disorders that happen in any community, arise principally from men of restless and unruly spirits; whose passions are under no control from religion; who regard nothing but their own private interests and inclinations; and who, therefore, feel no other obligation to the observance of the rules of justice and humanity, than what their own selfish and corrupt dispositions may suggest. To *such* characters may we fairly ascribe the origin of those *novel* and *pernicious doctrines*, which have lately been propagated amongst us with so much mischievous industry and zeal. It is almost unnecessary for me to name the doctrines of *equality*, and the *rights of man*; —doctrines, which have a direct tendency to render the lower classes of the people dissatisfied with their condition; and, by

levelling all distinctions, and dissolving all ties in society, to excite an universal spirit of disobedience to the laws, and disaffection to government; and which, therefore, cannot but meet with the just detestation and abhorrence of every virtuous man, and every good citizen.

I shall not take up your time, by entering into a particular confutation of principles, which carry absurdity on the very face of them, and which have been already so ably, and I trust successfully, controverted by men eminently qualified for such a task; but shall content myself with observing, that in a country like our own, possessing a constitution so admirably adapted to preserve at once, the authority of the sovereign, and the liberty of the subject; where the laws afford equal protection to the peer, and the peasant; and where the avenues to property and respect, nay, even to rank and dignity, are open to all; (which are the only rational, and practicable ideas of equality): in such a country, any attempt to diffuse such principles, is not only absurd, but malignant: it cannot proceed from pure benevolence and genuine philan-

thropy; but must originate from envy, and disappointed ambition; and from a secret wish to climb to the heights of popularity and power, upon the wreck of public order and tranquillity.

To the fabricators and supporters of such wild and delusive theories, I would recommend a serious attention to those wholesome lessons, which religion constantly inculcates to her votaries. She will shew them that they are in a fatal error:—she will urge them, by the strongest motives and arguments, to cultivate "a meek and "quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, "of great price:" 1 *Pet.* iii. 4.—she will instruct them, moreover, that in the end they will find it their truest interest, to be peaceable and orderly, in their several stations; sincere and upright, in all their words and actions; respectful to their superiors; and affable to their equals and inferiors. True religion, in short, by calling forth into action all the best energies and affections of the mind, qualifies men to adorn every rank and situation in life; and cannot fail to make us good subjects, and good members of society, because it enjoins submission to the higher

powers, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake: and farther, teaches us to practise all those milder graces, which will soften and meliorate our tempers, and incline us to prefer the welfare of the community, before any private convenience or advantage of our own. Wherever such a religion flourishes and abounds, all those virtues that can render a government secure, and a people happy, will be the fruits of it. "Happy, indeed, is that people, that is in "such a case; yea, happy is that people, "whose God is the Lord. *Psalm* cxliv. 15.

Whilst, therefore, we are careful to strengthen the cause, and promote the practice of genuine piety and virtue, we shall not only pursue our own greatest good, but shall likewise confer the highest benefit upon our country. The interests of our church and state are inseparable:—this is a truth, which our ancestors have taught us at their cost; we may rely upon their experience in this matter, and may be assured, that the religion and civil government of this nation, must ever stand and fall together.

Blest, therefore, as we are, with the ines-

timable advantages of a pure religion, and mild and equal laws; and living under the just and temperate administration of a prince, who not only supports both by his authority, but also illustrates and recommends them by his example; let it be our earnest endeavour to secure the continuance of such advantages, by promoting, as far as we are able, his wise and beneficent designs for the common welfare of his people. This is incumbent on us all, but becomes more especially the business of those, who, from their hereditary rank, or delegated authority, are intrusted with the application and execution of the laws.

By the wisdom and piety of our ancestors, statutes have been enacted against open immorality and profaneness; but these, from the lenient spirit of our government, have been, in some measure, suffered to grow obsolete, and to fall into disuse. When, however, from an abuse of such lenity, offences grow rank in the land, and not only the moral happiness, but even the political existence of society, becomes endangered from the baneful influence of vicious examples; it is then high time for the hand of justice

to interpose, and to check the progress of the contagion, by legal and competent means. Our attention hath not long since, been particularly directed to this subject, by a gracious proclamation from the throne; and, sure I am, that if ever there was a time that called for a more than ordinary exertion, to give energy and effect to the laws, it is the present; in which a daring contempt of religion and morality, is too conspicuous amongst all ranks of men; whilst, at the same time, opinions are disseminated, and doctrines inculcated, which strike at the very root of virtue, and of order; and which, if generally received, will ere long be found to be utterly subversive of the *civil*, as well as the *religious* interests, of mankind. Happy is it for society, when they who are invested with judicial authority bear not the sword in vain; but so use it, as to render themselves a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well. This, as it is the duty, so will it be the disposition of every magistrate, who is himself a good man, and a good Christian. The known integrity and abilities of those who *now* fill our seats of justice, leave us

no room to apprehend any failure on their parts: let it be our care, as it is our duty, (in our several stations) to second and assist their wise and salutary efforts; by using our utmost endeavours, both by our influence and example, to counteract the effects of those baneful and destructive principles, which have made so alarming an appearance amongst us. Let us entertain a just regard for our present happy establishment in church and state; and, as we tender our own private advantage, let us zealously labour to promote the public welfare and prosperity. Let us support our government upon the firm and solid principles of our excellent religion, beseeching the Almighty to preserve them both, a safeguard and ornament to each other.

To conclude:—being now, by the unprovoked aggressions of a cruel and perfidious enemy, involved in a war, and called upon to stand forth in the defence of our king and constitution, we have an additional and powerful motive to check the progress of vice, and to cherish the growth of true religion and virtue, in our land.

"When the host goeth forth against"

[our] " enemies, then" [it becomes more especially our interest, as well as our duty, to] " keep" [ourselves] " from every " wicked thing." *Deut.* xxiii. 9.

If we act thus, we may look up with confidence to the protection of that Almighty Arm, which hath been so often, and so signally stretched forth in our behalf. Then, " through God shall we do valiantly; for he " it is that shall tread down our enemies." *Psalm* ix. 12.

Whilst therefore, by pious gratitude and adoration towards our supreme Benefactor, we evince our strong and lasting sense of the blessings we have already received at his hands, and strengthen our claim to his future providential care and support; let our unshaken loyalty to our sovereign, and our uniform and respectful obedience to the laws, shew that we not only know how to value the happiness we enjoy, under our most admirable form of government, but are also determined to maintain and defend it, against *the malice of foreign*, and *the treachery of domestic attacks*.

Ecc-i

SERMON II.

DEUT. CH. iv. v. 7, 8, 9.

" *What nation is there so great, who hath God so*
" *nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is, in*
" *all things that we call upon him for?*
" *And what nation is there so great, that hath*
" *statutes and judgments so righteous, as all*
" *this law, which I set before you this day?*
" *Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul dili-*
" *gently, lest thou forget the things which thine*
" *eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thine*
" *heart, all the days of thy life.*"

Preached before the Right Hon. Lord C. J. Kenyon, and the Hon. Mr. Justice Grose, July 24, 1793.

THE words just read to you were addressed to the Israëlites by Moses, their great leader and legislator, and were designed to impress upon their minds a deep sense of those conspicuous marks of the divine favour which they had experienced; and to excite in them that gratitude and obedience to

their Almighty Benefactor, to which he had so just and so powerful a claim. God had chosen the children of Israël before all the other nations of the world ; and had manifested this choice by so many *miraculous* interpositions in their behalf, that one should have imagined no further arguments would have been necessary to convince them of their infinite obligations for such unmerited kindness, and to secure from them the warmest returns of reverence, affection, and duty.

It appears however, on the contrary, that Moses, who well knew the hardness of their hearts, and had witnessed so many flagrant instances of their forgetfulness and ingratitude, thought he could not more usefully employ the *latter* moments of a life, which had been principally dedicated to their service, than in recapitulating God's mercies and judgments, promises and threatenings, towards them ; in setting before them the blessings, or curses, which were to be the fruits of their observance, or breach, of his commandments ; and reminding them of the continual murmurings, and rebellions of their fathers, and the severe

and exemplary punishments that had been consequently inflicted upon them. Such is the obvious and uniform tendency of those arguments which occur in the chapter before us, and several of those that follow; and which are closed with a pathetic exhortation to obedience, and to a submissive reliance on that amazing power and goodness, which had been so frequently and so wonderfully exercised for their *particular* preservation and advantage.

Without attempting to draw a parallel between the circumstances of the Israëlites and those of our own nation, we may fairly deduce from the text the following plain and undeniable proposition:—"That great "and signal blessings conferred upon any "people, demand a suitable return of gra-"titude and obedience to the Almighty "Bestower of them."

The particular application of this general proposition to ourselves, will be the business of the remaining part of this discourse; in which I shall observe that order which the words before us naturally suggest: by calling your attention, in the first place, to those great and invaluable *religious* advantages

with which we are favoured. "What "nation is there so great, who hath *God so* "*nigh unto them*, as the Lord our God is, "in all things that we call upon him for?"

Secondly, I shall point out some of those important privileges and comforts which we enjoy under *our civil constitution* and *form of government*. "What nation is "there so great that hath *statutes* and "*judgments so righteous*, as all this law, "which I set before you this day?"

And shall conclude, with an exhortation to a proper acknowledgment, and improvement, of such distinguished blessings. "Only "take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul "diligently, lest thou forget the things "which thine eyes have seen, and lest they "depart from thine heart, all the days of "thy life."

Let us then, in the first place, reflect upon that *greatest*, and *most important* of all the blessings we enjoy, "our most holy "faith."

It is our happiness to live in the possession of a *religion* equally free from the gross impurities of heathenism, and the blind errors and narrow prejudices of bigotry and

superstition. We not only enjoy, in common with the rest of the Christian world, the glad light of the Gospel Revelation, but have been also, by God's favour and providence, delivered from those corruptions which still prevail in the Romish church; deforming the fair features of Christianity, and keeping the mind in slavish subjection to idle legends, and absurd ceremonies.

At the happy æra of *the Reformation* in this country, those clouds of ignorance which had so long obscured the faculties, and weakened the exertions of the human understanding, were in a great measure dispelled; and rational religion emancipated from the galling yoke of Papal tyranny, assumed her lawful empire in the soul of man. But not even *then*, was her triumph complete, or her throne secure. Some of the reformers themselves, though possessing many virtues which adorned their profession, were yet wanting in that genuine spirit of Christian charity, which knowing the infirmities of human nature, and how liable we are to error, knows also how to allow for difference in religious

opinions. The flames of intolerance and persecution, were as yet smothered only, not effectually suppressed. In a subsequent reign, they burst forth again with added strength and fury. Nor could they be said to be completely subdued, till our *religious*, as well as our *civil freedom*, was established on its proper basis, at *the glorious Revolution*.

It was at *that memorable period*, that *an act of toleration was passed: persecution for religion discountenanced by law; and the stain wiped off, which had so long been a reproach and a disgrace to Christianity. The humane† and liberal spirit of *the pre-*

* "The statute 1 W. and M. s. 2. c. 18, commonly "called the Toleration Act; exempts all dissenters (except "Papists, and such as deny the Trinity) from all penal laws "relating to religion, provided they take the oaths of alle- "giance and supremacy, and subscribe the declaration "against Popery, and repair to some congregation registered "in the bishop's court, or at the sessions, the doors whereof "must always be open."—*Blackstone's Com. B.* iv. *c.* 4.

† Many of the disabling and restraining laws, which at the Revolution were in force against Papists, have, since that period, been either repealed, or not applied with rigour. "They were to be accounted for (as Blackstone well ob- "serves) from their history, and the urgency of the times "which produced them." The same acute and elegant writer seems to have exactly foreseen what has happened

sent age, hath extended this indulgence of religious opinions still farther, and the privileges which have since been granted to the Roman Catholics, whilst they do honour to the temper of a great and enlightened nation, prove also, that the religion we profess bears all those characteristic marks of genuine Christianity, so admirably described by an inspired Apostle. "The "wisdom that is from above, is first pure, "then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be in- "treated; full of mercy and good fruits; "without partiality and without hypo- "crisy."—*James* iii. 17. Such are the mild and ingenuous features of our religious

since the time when he composed his Commentaries; for he adds, "but if a time should ever arrive (and perhaps it "is not very distant) when all fears of a Pretender shall have "vanished, and the power and influence of the Pope shall "become feeble, ridiculous, and despicable, not only in "England, but in every kingdom of Europe; it probably "would not then be amiss to review, and soften these rigo- "rous edicts, at least till the civil principles of the Roman "Catholics called again upon the legislature to renew them; "for it ought not to be left in the breast of every merciless "bigot to draw down the vengeance of these occasional "laws upon the inoffensive, though mistaken subjects, in "opposition to the lenient inclinations of the civil magistrate, "and to the destruction of every principle of toleration and "religious liberty."—*B.* iv. *c.* 4

establishment. Rejecting all measures of coercion and violence towards those of its own communion, it treats also with becoming tenderness, those who from conscientious motives dissent from it. Thus purified and exalted, religion amongst us is brought up to the original standard of the Gospel. Taking the Holy Scriptures for her guides, our Church proposeth nothing to us *" as an article of faith, or as requisite " or necessary to salvation, but what is " read therein, or may be proved thereby." In her worship, and discipline, she hath happily imitated the purity and simplicity of the apostolical and primitive ages; for whilst she disdains an ostentatious display of vain and shewy ceremonies; she yet observes such form and decency, as the solemnity and importance of religious services require; neither ascribing an undue efficacy to mere empty and exterior rites; nor abandoning devotion to the dangerous guidance of irregular fancy, and enthusiastic imagination.

In short, the doctrines and precepts of our religion are so founded on Scripture, and stated with such candour and plainness,

* See Article VI.

the terms of our communion are so liberal, and the whole public service of our church, breathes such a spirit of genuine piety, humility, and charity, that we need not hesitate to assert, there is no ecclesiastical establishment in the world, with which men of scrupulous consciences may more safely unite; and under which, even those who reject her tenets, may (if they be peaceable) enjoy more comfort and freedom, than *the Church of England*.

Let us now turn our attention, to the peculiar and important advantages, which we derive from our *civil polity*, and *form of government*. To do justice to this subject, by drawing a correct and finished picture of our admirable constitution, would require far greater abilities than I can boast, and more time than is usually allotted to discourses like the present; let it suffice therefore, to trace some of its great and distinguishing characters; and to shew that they have a direct tendency to make those happy, who live under its mild and genial influence. The British Constitution compared with that of any other state, whether ancient or modern, hath a decided superio-

rity in its favour. Happily composed of a due mixture of the several simple forms of government, it hath retained the advantages of them all, while it hath excluded the inconveniences peculiar to each.* Thus, whilst on the one hand, the *executive* power being lodged in a single person, gives to our system all the strength, and dispatch, that are to be found in *an absolute monarchy*; so on the other hand, the distribution of the *legislative* power amongst the three estates of the realm, the King, the Lords, and the Commons, includes in it all the advantages that could be derived from a *pure aristocracy*, and *democracy*. The Parliament of Great Britain, composed of orders of men, selected by different means, actuated by different springs, and attentive to different interests, hath the supreme direction and disposal of all things relating to government; and each distinct branch of the legislature being armed with a negative power, sufficient to repel any measure which it shall think inexpedient or dangerous, there can be no innovation attempted by either of the three branches,

* See Blackstone's Commentaries, Introduction, s. 2.

but may be successfully withstood by one of the other two. The harmony of the whole arises from this mutual connection, and mutual opposition of the several parts. By the former, they are enabled to provide for the good of the community in general; by the latter, they are restrained from encroaching on each others rights, or oppressing any part.

It is by this nice and equal balance* of

* "By a balance of power in the constitution is meant, "that there is no power possessed by one part of the legis- "lature, the abuse or excess of which is not checked by "some antagonist power, residing in another part. Thus, "the power of the two Houses of Parliament to frame laws, "is checked by the King's negative; that if laws subversive "of regal government should obtain the consent of Parlia- "ment, the reigning prince, by interposing his prerogative, "may save the necessary rights and authority of his station. "On the other hand, the arbitrary application of this nega- "tive is checked by the privilege which Parliament possesses "of refusing supplies of money to the exigencies of the "King's administration.

"The constitutional maxim "that the king can do no "wrong," is balanced by another maxim, not less constitu- "tional, "that the illegal commands of the King do not "justify those who assist, or concur in carrying them into "execution;" and by a second rule, subsidiary to this, "that the acts of the crown acquire not any legal force until "authenticated by the subscription of some of its great "officers."—*Paley's Moral and Polit. Philos. B.* vi. *c.* 7.

power in the constitution, that the honour and dignity of the sovereign are properly consulted: whilst the rights and privileges of the subject are effectually secured and maintained. We may here observe, that from the large share of the legislative authority, which the people of this country possess, through the medium of their representatives, and the check they have upon them, by the freedom and frequency of a new choice, they may be said to enjoy the peculiar and eminent advantage of being governed by laws, framed by their own advice or consent.

Under such a constitution, the laws, as might naturally be expected, are highly favourable to the liberty, and welfare of the subject. Whoever considers our legal code with due attention, and observes with what extreme caution it hath provided for the security of the life, the freedom, and the property of every member of the community, will feel no difficulty in admitting the truth of this assertion. It will be sufficient barely to mention, the invaluable privileges of a Trial by Jury,—the Habeas Corpus Act,—the Bill of Rights,—and the Liberty of the

Press, to establish it with the firmest conviction in every unprejudiced mind. But further, our laws are not only wise and salutary in their principles, but they are administered * also with the strictest and most scrupulous impartiality. British Justice opens her courts to all; in her eye, all men appear equal; and the property of the meanest peasant is, under her guardianship, as sacred and inviolable as the monarch's crown. Every Englishman moreover, is not only protected in the full and free en-

* "If we cast our eyes on the strict and universal impar-
"tiality with which justice is administered in England, we
"shall soon become convinced, that some inward essential
"difference exists between the English government, and
"those of other countries; and that its power is founded on
"causes of a distinct nature. Individuals of the most ex-
"alted rank do not entertain so much as the thought to
"raise the smallest direct opposition to the operation of the
"law. The complaint of the meanest subject, if preferred
"and supported in the usual way, immediately meets with
"a serious regard. The oppressor of the most extensive
"influence, though in the midst of a train of retainers, nay,
"though in the fullest flight of his career and pride, and
"surrounded by thousands of applauders and partizans, is
"stopped short at the sight of the legal paper which is de-
"livered into his hands, and a tipstaff is sufficient to bring
"him away, and produce him before the Bench." *De Lolme on the Constitution of England. Chap.* 17. *Part* 2.

joyment of his property; he can not only call his vines and his fig-trees his own, and sit unmolested under their shade; but he can also, by the sanction and instruction of the laws, transmit whatever he possesses safe and unimpaired to his descendants. Thus is the strongest and most effectual encouragement held out to diligence, ingenuity, and virtue; for whilst, under such a constitution, we are certain to obtain the fair rewards of our labour and integrity, we are also secured in the quiet possession and unrestrained disposal of them, when obtained. In short, (as hath been well observed)* "the greatest freedom that can "be enjoyed by man, in a state of civil so-"ciety, and the greatest security that can "be given him, with respect to the pro-"tection of his character, property, per-"sonal liberty, limb and life, is afforded to "every individual, by our present consti-"tution:" and the restraints which the laws lay us under, are as essentially conducive to our own particular interest and happiness, as to those of the community at large, for whose advantage they were im-

* Appendix to Bishop of Llandaff's Sermon.

posed. They who so eagerly cry out for a reform in our system of government, would do well to attend to the following interesting observations of a learned and elegant writer upon the subject.* "Upon ques-
"tions of reform (saith he) the habit of re-
"flection to be encouraged, is a sober com-
"parison of the constitution under which
"we live, not with models of speculative
"perfection, but with the actual chance of
"obtaining a better. Political innovations
"(he adds) commonly produce many effects
"beside those that are intended: the direct
"consequence is often the least important."
If it were necessary to appeal to fact, in support of the justice and propriety of these remarks, the wild and impracticable theories, the flagrant enormities, and the distracted condition of *a neighbouring country*, would give them a striking and melancholy confirmation. Let *her* example prove a warning to us. Sensible of the solid value and importance of the blessings we enjoy, under our happy form of government, let us not risk the loss of them, by rash at-

* Paley's Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Book vi. chap. 7.

tempts to new model, or alter, what hath so long stood the test of experience, and been deservedly the object of universal envy and admiration.

But whilst *other* nations, misguided by the deceitful lights of *false philosophy*, are plunged into all the miseries of anarchy and civil war, and are led to forego real and substantial, in pursuit of visionary advantages; let it ever be remembered by *ourselves*, and let us impress the sentiment upon the hearts of our children, that we are in actual possession of as large a portion of civil liberty as is consistent with that order and subordination, without which not only government, but even society itself, cannot long subsist.

A few remarks upon the use we ought to make of the privileges and happiness we enjoy as a people, shall conclude the present discourse.

When we reflect upon the wonderful manner in which our religious and civil establishments were first formed, and have been since preserved, from the severe and repeated shocks they have both experienced, we find ample reason to admire the wisdom, and adore the goodness of God, so

conspicuously exercised in their behalf. But such, alas! is the perverseness of human nature, that the strongest impressions of divine goodness are too easily effaced. Continual blessings become so familiar, that they lose their influence upon mankind; and it requires sometimes an awakening call of Providence, to bring them back to reflection, and to their duty. National ingratitude hath generally been followed by national punishment; and the people who despise, or lightly esteem, the mercies they enjoy, have just reason to apprehend, that they shall be speedily, and suddenly deprived of them. To us therefore, who have been favoured with such signal and repeated instances of God's protection and care, the caution of the text may with peculiar force and propriety be applied. "We have "heard with our ears, O God! our fathers "have told us, what work thou didst in "their days, in the times of old."—*Psalm* xliv. 1. And we must acknowledge, that in our *own* days, the Lord's arm hath not been shortened, that it could not save; but "God hath been also our refuge and

" strength, a very present help in trouble." *Psalm* xlvi. 1.

It behoves us then, to " take heed to our-
" selves, and keep our souls diligently, lest
" we forget the things which our ears have
" heard, and our eyes have seen, and lest
" they depart from our hearts, all the days
" of our lives."

Let it be our first concern, to evince our gratitude and love to the Author of all our blessings, by fervent adoration, and humble obedience; and an earnest endeavour to encourage the practice, and extend the influence of true religion amongst mankind. Let us be careful to shew our sense of the civil advantages we so eminently share, by an affectionate attachment to our Sovereign, and a zealous support of that government, by which we are protected in the possession of the best, and dearest privileges of human nature. Convinced of the infinite importance of religion to the *temporal* interests of society, let us be ready, on every fit occasion, to strengthen and assist the civil magistrate, in his endeavours to promote the cause of piety and virtue; and to check and suppress

every tendency to immorality and profaneness. To effect this salutary purpose, we must not only pay a due respect to the laws of God, and our country ourselves; but also must use our utmost exertions, both by our example and influence, to prevail on others to do the same. By such a conduct, we shall not only shew, that we set a proper value upon our excellent Constitution, in church and state, but shall take the most effectual method, to preserve the same from the insidious machinations, or open assaults, of its artful and malignant opponents; and our unfeigned devotion towards God, and our stedfast loyalty to our King, shall secure to us the continuance of *the religious*, and *civil blessings* we enjoy, and render us a virtuous and happy, (and if united) a great and powerful people.

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